



Montgomery County Council

From the office of Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg

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Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg Releases Report Showing Significant Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Respect to Montgomery Reproductive Health Services She Will Pursue Task Force to Study Issue and Make Recommendations to County Executive, County Council

ROCKVILLE, Md., February 4, 2010—Montgomery County Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At Large) said today that the report she has released on reproductive health services highlights the significant racial and ethnic disparities with respect to need for reproductive health services in County. The report states only one-third of women in the County who qualify for publicly-funded reproductive services actually receive those important services.

The “Report on Reproductive Health Services in Montgomery County” was a collaborative effort of the Montgomery County Reproductive Health Education and Advocacy Work Group, convened by Councilmember Trachtenberg in June 2009. The work group was led and implemented by the Jacobs Institute of Women’s Health at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. The principal authors were Susan F. Wood, Amita N. Vyas and Marquita N. Campbell.

The report was released this week by Councilmember Trachtenberg at the 2010 Women’s Legislative Briefing at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville.

The study documents a growing need for reproductive health services in Montgomery County and highlights significant racial and ethnic disparities with respect to the need for these services in the County. Although white women comprise 55 percent of the population in Montgomery County, black (25 percent) and Hispanic (22 percent) women are proportionately most in need of publicly supported family planning services.

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“Our study clearly illustrates a pressing public policy need to examine the complex issues surrounding teen pregnancy in Montgomery County, and elsewhere, particularly as it affects women of color,” said Councilmember Trachtenberg, who is a member of the County Council’s Health and Human Services Committee. “As a County, we should look closely at how we can reduce teen pregnancy and how we better provide support and services for those in need.”

Councilmember Trachtenberg’s office is currently drafting a Council resolution to establish a task force to investigate the issue and to make recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council.

Similar to national trends, Montgomery County has experienced an increase in teen birth rates, particularly among young Hispanic women. In 2007, nearly 3 percent of all births in Montgomery County were to teenagers 18 years old or younger. Hispanic teens were more than twice as likely to give birth as their white or African American counterparts. Data from 2007, examining teen births by race and ethnicity in the County, shows that among all women who gave birth to their first child, 3 percent were white teens, 4 percent were black teens and 7 percent were Hispanic teens.

The report describes the current landscape of reproductive health services in Montgomery County and provides insight into the strengths and needs of service delivery sites, as well as perceptions of barriers women face when accessing or trying to access services. This assessment utilized existing County level data from the Guttmacher Institute and results from a quantitative web based survey of family planning clinics in the County.

Among the several recommendations that have been put forth by the Reproductive Health, Education and Advocacy Work Group regarding publicly funded reproductive health services are:

- Recent national trends indicate that teen births are on the rise, and after 15 years of a downward trend, it is time to refocus attention to adolescent pregnancy and births. Montgomery County is home to a large number of Hispanic teens for whom the teen birth rate is disproportionately high—the County may want to consider convening a task force to take an in-depth look into the unique reproductive health and service needs of this population.
- Only one clinic in the report’s survey identified education and outreach as a method of publicizing and marketing services. Outreach efforts into specific communities ought to be considered in order to meet the needs of low-income women. Reaching out to community organizations and faith-based groups may be one way to provide broad-based health education as well as information on services available to women residing in Montgomery County.
- Immigration status and legal status was cited as a barrier women may face when seeking care and needs to be addressed.
- Minority women disproportionately comprise the low-income population in Montgomery County. Reproductive health services must have the resources to provide culturally competent services to meet this growing and large demand.
- Efforts should continue to expand capacity and access by increasing the number of family planning sites and broadening their geographic reach.

- The work group recommends further study and assessment to identify other avenues by which Montgomery County women obtain family planning services since the need is substantial.

Members of the Reproductive Health, Education and Advocacy Work Group include:

- Susan F. Wood, PhD, Associate Professor and Director, Jacobs Institute of Women's Health, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services
- Marielsa Bernard, Associate Judge, Montgomery County Circuit Court
- Dana Beyer, MD, Senior Adviser to Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg, Montgomery County Council
- Jenny Blasdel, Executive Director, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
- Paul Burka, MD, FACOG, Clinical Associate Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology, The George Washington University Medical Center
- Karen Butler-Colbert, MSN, CRNP, Executive Director, Teen and Young Adult Health Connection
- Barbara Clark, MSN, CRNP, Clinical Director, Mobile Medical Care
- Jennifer Cryor Baldwin, Montgomery County Commission on Women
- Carol W. Garvey, MD, MPH, Chair, Primary Care Coalition of Montgomery County
- Maria Gomez, RN, MPH, President and CEO, Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care
- Sharon Grosfeld, Esq., former Maryland State Senator
- Lisae C. Jordan, Esq. General Counsel, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Laura Meyers, PhD, President and CEO, Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington
- Regina L. Oldak, Montgomery County Commission on Women
- Wendy Royalty, MSW, Maryland Planned Parenthood
- Jennifer Todd, DrPH, Director, Public Health Science Program, University of Maryland
- Alan Trachtenberg, MD, MPH Adjunct Associate Professor, Community Medicine, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services
- Amita N. Vyas, PhD, Assistant Professor and Director, Maternal and Child Health, The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services
- James F. Walters, Professor, Montgomery College TP/SS
- Linda Wright, MD, Deputy Director, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development

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